CLAIMS:

1. An air bearing slider comprising:

a transducer for communicating with a disc; and

means for supporting the transducer so that the transducer is at a closest position with respect to the disc during flight.

2. A slider of claim 1 wherein the means for supporting the transducer comprises:

a composite slider body with a front portion composed of a first material and a rear portion composed of a second material, the slider body having an air bearing surface defined on a disc opposing face of the slider body, where the air bearing surface comprises the front portion and the rear portion; and

a transducer basecoat portion attached to the rear portion of the slider body and containing the transducer.

3. The slider of claim 2, where an interface of the first material and the second material comprises a latitudinal plane substantially perpendicular to the air bearing surface.

4. The slider of claim 3 wherein a thickness of the first material is as much as about 15 times the thickness of the second material.

5. The slider of claim 4 wherein a thickness of the first material is as little as about half the thickness of the second material.

6. The slider of claim 3, wherein the transducer portion comprises the second material.

7. The slider of claim 6, where a lapping durability of the first material is greater than a lapping durability of the second material.

8. The slider of claim 6, where the first material is AlTiC and the second material is Al_2O_3.

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9. A method of manufacturing a slider which supports a transducer so that the transducer is at a closest position with respect to a disc during flight, the method comprising the steps of:

attaching a layer comprising a second material to a wafer comprising a first material, thereby forming a composite wafer, the composite wafer comprising a plurality of sliders;

forming on the layer of second material a transducer basecoat portion containing a plurality of transducers; and

forming an air bearing surface on a slider, the air bearing surface comprising a leading portion of the first material and a trailing portion of the second material.

10. The method of claim 9, where a lapping durability of the first material is greater than a lapping durability of the second material.

11. The method of claim 9 further comprising severing the composite wafer into a plurality of bars.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising severing a bar into a plurality of individual sliders.

13. The method of claim 9 wherein a thickness of the first material is as much as about 15 times the thickness of the second material.

14. The method of claim 9 wherein a thickness of the first material is as little as about half the thickness of the second material.